SPARTACIST

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Palestine

Kill the Deal!

Palestinians flee northern Gaza Strip after intensified Israeli bombardment, September 16. Inset: Netanyahu and Trump bond at White House, September 29.

Brandon/AP

Habboub/Abaca

The genocide in Gaza must stop. But only fools can expect Trump and Netanyahu to bring peace to the Middle East. The plan they unveiled on September 29 demands total capitulation by the Palestinian resistance and offers only further colonial subjugation. Although it is easy for any pro-Palestine observer to see how this deal is obscene and would be a disaster, answering what should be done is much more difficult. The Palestinian resistance finds itself in a corner. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is only getting worse, there is no way to defeat Israel militarily. And there is a strong sentiment that this conflict must end. Moreover, the diplomatic pressure is extremely intense, with the whole world lining up behind Trump.

It may appear on the surface that making major concessions, such as releasing the hostages, accepting a technocratic government and disarming, will bring an end to the suffering. But the truth is that it will only give Israel a free hand to exterminate the Palestinians. Just look at what happened in 1982, when the armed Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters acceded to withdrawing from Lebanon. This opened the road for the Sabra and Shatila massacres, marginalized the PLO and paved the way for the Oslo Accords. To retreat

Sabra and Shatila Must Not Be Repeated!

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from defeat and live to fight another day is one thing. But to leave the population of Gaza defenseless in the face of Israeli tyranny is another. We must say in one voice: ***No capitulation!***

Still the question remains: How to stop the genocide? Trump as always is full of bluster and threats, promising to annihilate Hamas if it does not accept the deal. There is no doubt that the resistance in Gaza has been dealt severe blows, but after two years it remains a thorn in Israel's side. If Israel could defeat Hamas through conventional military means, it would have done so long ago. Palestinians have borne an unbearable toll, but Israel and even the U.S. have not been left unscathed by the two years of conflict. If pressure is applied at the right place, it is possible to force Israel and the U.S. to end the genocide and make real concessions.

Here the strategy most likely to give immediate results is also the one that can best advance the aim of Palestinian liberation. It consists in mobilizing working people around the world against their rulers, who either directly aid or conciliate the genocide. This is straightforward, but obviously it hasn't happened yet. We need to understand why.

Two years on, the movement cannot simply continue on the same road and pretend this is working. We must look at reality squarely and draw real political lessons. Two illusions have plagued the movement since the beginning and have hindered the prospect of deeper popular uprisings. The first is that the international community of bandits and its rigged legal system can somehow be pressured to intercede in favor of Palestine. The second is that there is an ever-rising tide of support for Palestine across the world that will halt Israel. At bottom, both rest on the false belief that liberal norms of morality will be sufficient to stop the genocide.

Diplomacy Is a Dead End

For months, political leaders throughout the world had been ramping up their rhetoric against Israel. In September, a United Nations commission of inquiry "discovered" that Israel had committed acts of genocide. Meanwhile, one Western country after another proclaimed that it "recognized" a Palestinian state. As for the Arab countries, after Israel bombed U.S. stooge Qatar, they shook their fists, declaring "Enough is enough." What glorious momentum for righteousness!

But in the hours following the Trump-Netanyahu press conference, all this diplomatic posturing and grandstanding was shown to be utterly cynical and meaningless. One after another, the leaders of the world praised Donald Trump and called for his sick plans—proposing himself and Tony Blair as overlords of Gaza—to be implemented. Support was near-unanimous, from UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Spain's "Socialist" prime minister Sánchez all the way to the Emir of Qatar and the Communist Party of China.

In one fell swoop it became clear where everyone really stood on the question of Palestine. The diplomatic noise from U.S. allies and puppets was clearly just one big maneuver to isolate the Palestinian resistance when it mattered most. As for the leaders of the Global South, they showed once again that when push comes to shove, they are happy to look on from a distance as the U.S. and Israel commit their crimes.

To anyone familiar with the Palestinian conflict, none of this came as a surprise. The real question was to determine how the Palestinian movement should react to this solid diplomatic front demanding capitulation. Should it play the diplomatic game, or expose the treachery of the international community?

In its response to Trump's deal, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) chose the former, declaring that it "values the Arab, Islamic, and international efforts, as well as the efforts of US President Donald Trump, calling for an end to the war on the Gaza Strip." Its statement accepted certain aspects of the deal while staying silent on others. While it remains to be seen whether Hamas' apparent openness to Trump's ultimatum will lead to any real concessions, its response already shows a fatal flaw in its approach.

The problem is not that Hamas agreed to negotiate certain aspects of the deal or that it engaged in empty diplomatic flattery per se. Rather, the conciliatory language it used is the symptom of a deeper problem. In attempting to diplomatically isolate Israel, Hamas essentially pulls its punches against other regimes, especially those of the Arab world. This has been a consistent trait. From its planning of October 7 all the way to its current tactics, Hamas has sought to pry the Arab regimes out of Israel's orbit and into its camp through diplomatic maneuvering.

This is the same strategy that was used by the PLO under Yasser Arafat. It is not clever but disastrous. First, because it is hopeless. If these regimes sometimes lean toward the resistance, it is only because they feel the hatred of their own people burning at their feet and need to contain pro-Palestinian sentiment. No matter how far they bend, at the end of the day their corrupt power rests on U.S. support—they will only cross their master's red lines if they have no other choice. Second, it sacrifices the Palestinian movement's strongest card in West Asia: the masses' seething anger at the conciliation of Zionism by their rulers.

Pro-Palestinian sentiment runs deep in the Arab world, from youth in Algeria demanding to be sent to Palestine to fight to sentiment among armed forces to declare war on Israel. There is little doubt that an appeal by the Palestinian resistance to the people of Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye to break the shackles of the pro-imperialist dictators who rule them and come to the aid of Gaza would cause major political turmoil. This could potentially change the balance of power

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Penney/AFPTV

Diwan of the State of Qatar/Anadolu

Left: Smoke rising from Israeli air strikes targeting Hamas negotiators in Doha, Qatar, September 9. Right: Funeral for Hamas leaders and Qatari policeman killed in Israeli bombing.

in the region. Trump and his cronies are fully aware of this danger, which is one of the reasons they are eager to wrap up the conflict in favor of Israel as quickly as possible. But instead of exploiting this weakness by ***increasing the pressure*** on the hated regimes, Hamas is showering them with undeserved praise and depending on them for negotiations.

While these points apply most strikingly to the pro-American regimes of the Muslim world, they are also true more generally for the rest of the Global South and for Western countries. Around the world working masses are being squeezed more and more by their rulers, the very people who refuse to act to stop the genocide and conciliate U.S. imperialism. These people will not be maneuvered into supporting Palestine. It is only through shows of strength by the oppressed that they will concede anything of substance. The history of the class struggle is unambiguous on this point: playing nice with the oppressors never achieves anything.

Diplomatic tactics that dull the senses of the masses, feeding them false notions that their rulers can be convinced to help the Palestinians, must be rejected. This does not mean rejecting all forms of diplomacy or compromise. But to the extent that such tactics are employed, they must be aimed at advancing the struggles of the oppressed against imperialism and raising their political consciousness.

The Real State of the Movement

Following Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, protests erupted around the world. The most important of these was in Italy, where a general strike brought hundreds of thousands into the streets. These successful mobilizations have led many in the solidarity movement to enthusiastically proclaim that the tide is rising for Palestine. In reality, the movement finds itself in a much more precarious position than appears on the surface.

In many Western countries, the hypocritical rhetoric against Israel and the largely meaningless recognition of the Palestinian state have opened up political space for mass mainstream support for Palestine. In Germany, it suddenly became OK for Zionists in the Left Party to protest for Palestine, and even warmongering Chancellor Merz claimed he would stop weapons shipments to Israel. In Australia, Labor prime minister Albanese suddenly remembered some of his pro-Palestinian credentials after years of being a loyal stooge for Israel. In both countries, it is no coincidence that the largest protests occurred almost two years after October 7, just as it is getting more acceptable to show support for Palestine.

Of course, it is a good thing that large numbers of people are protesting for Palestine. But it is important to understand the character of these mobilizations. Overall, we are not witnessing the emergence of a rising anti-imperialist tide. Rather, we are seeing the disappointed supporters of the old left-of-center parties pushed into action as they see the world they knew and loved crumble under the blows of Donald Trump and an insurgent right. While this dynamic will push many to draw more radical lessons, this will not be an immediate process. In the meantime, the pro-Palestine movement in the West is still dominated by left-liberal forces who find themselves increasingly impotent and isolated from the working class.

Even in Italy, where the movement took the character of mass political strikes, it would be a mistake to exaggerate its strength and even its proletarian character. While we welcome these strikes, the truth is that the Italian working class

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Spartaco

Mass protest in Rome, October 4. Banner says: "Throw Out the Government, Accomplice to Genocide!"

is very divided on the question of Palestine. Many resent the fact that unions that have done nothing for decades to fight for Italian workers are suddenly making a lot of noise for Palestine. This is laying the basis for a backlash, not only in Italy but throughout the West. Moreover, despite the strength of the recent strikes, the reactionary Meloni government remains in a strong position, as shown by two recent victories in important regional elections.

Whether it is in Germany, Australia, Italy or anywhere else in the Western world, the left is largely in denial of its growing social isolation. As such, it cannot even begin to understand why it has not made more progress toward winning the working class to the Palestinian cause. The truth is that many workers are sick of hearing self-righteous leftists grandstand about what is morally right as they see their social conditions worsen by the day. For the left to build real influence among the working masses, it must abandon virtue-signaling and empty symbolism and fight to advance the material interests of the oppressed.

This is true in general, but it is acutely posed when it comes to the question of Palestine. There have been countless symbolic acts against the genocide in Gaza, but very few that have caused significant material damage to the Zionist war effort. The social sectors that could land such blows, starting with the industrial working class, are generally dismissed as hopelessly backward. This attitude naturally doesn't help bring them over to the side of the Palestinians.

In the few strategic unions still influenced by radical militants, such as in the ports of Genoa in Italy and Piraeus in Greece, occasional symbolic actions are enough to send most leftists to the moon. The fact, however, is that even the most leftist and militant unions have not organized a struggle aimed at putting a decisive stop to their governments' complicity in the genocide. This is due not to a moral failing or lack of individual courage by union militants but to flawed political conceptions.

English-language Spartacist podcast
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To build a Palestinian movement that has decisive social weight and can force governments to break their support for Israel, we must find a way to convince a majority of the working class to fight for this cause. This can be done, not on the basis of abstract human morality but because there is an unbreakable link between working-class exploitation at home and the international crimes of imperialism. To advance their social conditions, workers must confront their own rulers—the same people tolerating or participating in the genocide. It is also the same labor leaders who sell workers short at home who can only muster symbolic actions for Palestine. The point is that successful working-class struggle at home must bring the Palestinian question to the fore, just as much as the Palestinian struggle needs to connect with the struggles of workers on the domestic terrain.

Pro-Palestinian revolutionaries must temper the illusory and frantic enthusiasm of many in the movement, look at the situation soberly and fight hard to bridge the gap between the left and the working class. Every single call for working-class action for Palestine must be tied to concrete demands for the betterment of working conditions. Union leaders who refuse to do this must be sharply exposed. Bringing the working class into action is not the easiest route—it takes patient and systematic work. But it is the only one that can have a decisive impact on the outcome of the struggle.

The Road Forward

If we are to make the Trump-Netanyahu deal a dead letter and impose a ceasefire favorable to Palestine, we need to be guided by hard realities. Our strategic principles must be determined by what will ***genuinely advance the Palestinians' struggle***, not by self-serving moral righteousness or by what looks good on social media.

We must be clear. Great power diplomacy has not worked for the Palestinians; it never has and never will. Liberal solidarity movements have also failed. We need to bring real force to bear if we want to change the current dynamic. This force exists among the working masses of the Arab world and everywhere else. But it needs to be unleashed. For this to have any chance of happening we must disregard the impotent instruments of liberalism and seize the principles and methods of the class struggle. Only they can bring Palestinian liberation.

—8 October